

# Do You Truly *Honor* Your pastor?

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*A Biblical perspective on the heart attitude that must be present when a church pays the salary of the pastor.*

It is interesting what you can find in your local Christian book store these days. I've been a Christian over 20 years and believe me, things have certainly changed as far as what you can find in a Christian bookstore. Books on dieting and books on movie stars and sports figures stock the shelves of many a Christian bookstore. Books unheard of when I became a follower of Christ Jesus. But it is interesting also what one **cannot** find in a Christian bookstore these days. I was shopping around in a few Christian bookstores a few days ago, looking for what I considered a pivotal topic in church matters, ***the pastor's salary***.

Unfortunately I found it rather disturbing that when I looked for some publication relative to the church's responsibility concerning the pastor's salary that I was able to find **nothing**. What was even more disturbing was that I found nothing in print which dealt with an area that is foundational to the issue of the pastor's salary and that is the *heart attitude* of those who delegate the funds toward their pastor. I was left in dismay and disbelief that a subject that is so important in scripture and one that should be so paramount in the church was **literally** ignored! Now don't get me wrong, I'm not implying by any means that the fault lies with the bookstore. In fact, no one would be reading this booklet *at all* if it were not for Mike DiPatino, who is a brother beloved, and manager of The Christian Discount Book Center in Whittier, California. In fact, he **urged** me to write on this topic, seeing that no one else apparently did!

My intent in this booklet is to deal with the simple and undeniable truth that unless we have the right *heart attitude* toward our pastor(s), then whatever standard that is being used to determine the salary of a pastor is **wrong**, plain and simple. It doesn't matter what a church or board pays their pastor if their heart attitude is wrong. What determines whether their heart is right or wrong is seen in how they understand the concept of *honoring* their pastor. What should be my attitude toward my pastor *according to the Bible*? I am not interested with how you **feel** about your pastor, but your heart attitude toward your pastor. It has been my experience as a pastor that most people's feelings toward me (both good and bad) are nothing resembling the Biblical attitude that one must have to be able to properly honor any pastor. The true and only attitude that matters to me and any other pastor is found in the pages of scripture.

My intent is **not** to write about the qualifications of a pastor because that is not the purpose of this booklet. However, it is important for us to understand that when I refer to a pastor, I am speaking of one who falls under the Biblical standard that is presented to us in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy and Titus, where the qualifications are clearly pointed out for us all. So my point is not to address paying a good pastor verses a bad pastor. It is to say that either you have a Biblical pastor or a fake. If you have a Biblical pastor(s), then this booklet is for you. If you have a man who is not a Biblical pastor, then you need to get rid of him and get a Biblical pastor, then read this booklet!

My intent is also not to deal in the area of amount of money that you should pay your pastor. I believe that if the heart attitude is right, the dollar amount of what you should pay your pastor will follow. Remember what I said earlier:

*"it doesn't matter what a church or board pays their pastor if their heart is wrong and what determines whether their heart is right or wrong is seen in how they understand the concept of honoring their pastor."*

Let's deal with a very powerful subject before we delve into the concept of *honoring the pastor*. The issue is "do we *love* our pastor?"

12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; 13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. [And] be at peace among yourselves. **1 Thessalonians 5:12-13**

Peace begins when the congregation manifest proper, Biblical attitude toward those who **lead** them. Paul *urged* these brethren, *begged* them, to do these things concerning their actions and attitude toward the leaders who ruled them, spiritually speaking. What were the proper attitudes Paul wrote of?

**1. Know them:** To have regard for someone, to cherish, to pay attention to someone.

- *This speaks of the congregation knowing their pastor as a **person**.*

Many shy away from the pastor and that *primarily* because of their former bad experiences in their religious past which hinders them from being free to love their pastor. Ironically, shying away from the pastor could be displayed as an *over application* of respect. Respect toward a person does not translate into isolation *from* that person. You will never get to know your pastor by behaving in this way. The tragedy about this behavior is that you assume that you know your pastor based on what *others* say, or what you make up in your *own mind* based solely on what you *see with your eyes*. I am convinced that many in the church do not really *know* their pastor. They *think* they do, but they do not, and make little or no attempt to find out anything about his life. This attitude is clearly against this injunction from scripture.

**2. Know them which labor among you:** The word labor means, To grow weary, tired, exhausted (with toil or burdens or grief).

- *This speaks of the congregation knowing the pastor as a **worker** and the **importance** of what he or they are doing.*

Most people do not have a **clue** as to the importance of the work of ministry, so they flood the pastor with trivial matters which could be easily handled *themselves*, thus preventing or hindering him from doing his God ordained role of ministry. For example, many wives *refuse* to go to their husbands to *learn* from them, which is what the Bible *clearly teaches*, who wouldn't hesitate for a *second* to run to the pastor. Since many professing Christians do not read their Bibles with any serious frequency, their religious past creeps up again, as they were always used to flooding the pastor's life with matters which are in no way greater than the matter of prayer and study of the word of God. As I said, the word labor means, To grow weary, tired, exhausted (with toil or burdens or grief). But again, most people do not know the pastor as a *person*, nor his *work*, so they don't respond the right way to him whatsoever.

**3. Know them which labor among you and are over in the Lord:** The words, "*are over you*" actually means, **to rule**.

- *This speaks of the congregation knowing their pastor as a **leader**.*

The *primary* use of this word relates to those who are over people, such as, the elders, the pastors. This speaks of the congregation knowing, respecting and operating within the leadership of the pastor. Many people in the church approach the idea of someone ruling their lives as repulsive. They feel somehow that equality in Christ means that positions within the church that were established by God are **meaningless**. So instead of the people showing respect toward their pastor what usually happens is rebellion arises, disrespect, disobedience or some just ignore him all together.

So the instructions given to the church body have to do with the **attitude** of the congregation toward their pastor. The function of the pastor is to rule or to lead people. To rule means, to superintend, to preside over, to be a protector or guardian of the flock. It seems to me that many pastors are *afraid* to exercise this most vital part of their ministry, lest they concern themselves of how the congregation will respond to them. The problem with this thinking is that if a man is given oversight over a church and fails to do so, he too is just as disobedient to God as the

congregation who will not follow his leadership. If the congregation is obedient to God, they will want men to lead them, not someone they can manipulate to satisfy their own desires.

**Know them which labor among you and are over in the Lord who admonish you:**

- *This speaks of the congregation knowing their pastor as a **teacher**.*

Another aspect of the ministry of the pastor which is *very* unpopular is this area of admonition. It means, to warn and to exhort. There is a twofold meaning in this word, to warn and to teach. The one who is resisting is to be instructed with the intent as to bring that person back to the right way. Admonition is the redirection of wrong behavior toward right behavior. If admonition is not heeded, then the stronger step of removal is necessary to protect the body.

**13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. [And] be at peace among yourselves.**

Also the congregation, in addition to the things described in the previous verses, are to treat the pastor with the greatest honor—in love. Christians should esteem these leaders *very highly*, recognizing their worth, giving them thoughtful consideration and superabundant respect. This is the fitting and proper respect that all believers should have toward their pastor who labor in their midst in the work of the Lord.

This is the **only** attitude that should be displayed toward their pastor if they expect to live in peace among themselves.

The need to regard leaders highly is further stressed in the second exhortation. Church members are to esteem, value, and respect their leaders *for their works sake*. The Greek is strong: Hold them in the highest regard. This should be a **continuing** attitude. Some church leaders do not command as much personal respect as others, but Paul taught that all should be held in esteem **because** of the nature of their responsibilities before God. Not just some respect, but the **highest** respect is due these leaders, and it is to come from an attitude of **affection** (in love) for them, again, because of their work, if for no personal reason. Two reasons for this exhortation are the nature of their work and the fact that church leaders do a good service to others.

It isn't the attitude, *"I'll do what he said only if I like him"*. Rather, it should be, *"I love him because of the great work that is done in my life because of his ministry"*.

So we can see that peace within the church begins with the relationship of the congregation toward their pastor. We need to have the proper attitude of respect toward pastors who rule over you in the Lord. I submit to you that unless a church loves their pastor and continues in that attitude towards him, the issue of his salary will be a dead issue. Anything that will be given to him will be grudgingly and of necessity, rather than from a cheerful heart from people who are glad to obey the plan of God and **bless the man of God**.

So what should be the proper attitude toward the pastor as far as his pay is concerned? Again, the issue is one of *heart attitude* toward the pastor. Your attitude is foundational as to how much you value your pastor.

*If you value him much, then you will pay him according to your estimation of him. If you value him little, then you will pay him according to your contempt of him.*

Now it should not surprise you that the Bible **never** addresses the issue of how much money you should give your pastor. The reason why is because it's not the amount of money that's the priority, but the *heart attitude* and your understanding of the concept of *honoring* your pastor. The amount of money that you give your pastor is determined by how much value you place on him, and that value encompasses all of his character and work.

*The Bible makes no issue of financial amounts because the proper attitude precedes financial values!*

But if you are not following Biblical standards to determine what to pay your pastor, it should not surprise anyone that the only standard of evaluation will be financial and although that may have its place, finances as a *single* standard is nowhere taught in the Bible.

*Also, it is shown in scripture that those who are responsible for determining the salary of a pastor should not always opt for the lowest, cheapest, flimsiest, pay package that they could muster. This clearly violates the Biblical attitude that should be shown toward the pastor.*

Now the scriptures are clear as to what our attitudes should be toward our pastor. Let's look at a clear standard when it comes to the proper attitude that should be shown toward a pastor of a local church concerning his pay.

*17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. 1 Timothy 5:17-18*

- *Let the elders that rule well*

First, Paul deals with the leaders *ability to lead*. He said, let the elders (pl.) that **rule well**. The word, rule, is a verb which translates, "having taken the lead." We are talking about leaders, not followers. We are talking about leaders who preside over the oversight of the church in an excellent manner. What determines an excellent manner? If you are in a church which is ruled by a pastor(s) who rules in a way where **the environment is conducive to spiritual growth**, then he is doing what God commanded him to do and thereby, he is ruling well. This should be the standard which determines what it means to rule well. This is at the heart of the issue of the rest of this verse.

***If the environment in your church fellowship to gives every opportunity for every faithful and obedient individual to grow spiritually, then the pastor(s) is doing all that God has commanded him to do and no more should be expected out of him because no more is given him of God to do, and no greater work than the spiritual work of edifying saints is more important to the pastor.***

The pastor's responsibility is to do the spiritual work of God, not fixing dinners, fences, cleaning floors, or a multitude of other things that have no place in his life. Let me say it again, if the environment at that church gives every opportunity for every faithful and obedient individual to grow spiritually, then he is doing all that God has commanded him to do and no more should be expected out of him because no more is given him of God to do and no greater work than the spiritual work of edifying saints is more important to the pastor. If this is being done, then he is ruling well, and as a result of that, then you as a congregation, board member, deacon, financial chairman, etc., should be thankful because, you should be growing under his ministry and having your attitude geared toward submission under his leadership.

***The pastor's primary responsibility, and the only responsibility seen in the scripture, is the labor in the word and doctrine. If you have any other requirement that you place upon your pastor(s) which you consider his responsibility, you are without Biblical support.***

The proper attitude will indeed cause you to place great honor toward your pastor, described in the next portion of the verse.

- *Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy*

This means that I am to judge worthy, **based on his ability described above**, to deem him deserving of something. You see my friends, it is the *heart attitude* that is to be shaped around the ability of the pastor to lead in a way that is conducive toward spiritual growth in the church. If he is doing that, then I am compelled to deem him to be deserving of something. What is that something? Thankfully, it is seen in the next portion of this verse.

- *Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor*

No matter how you translate this verse, it means, **double pay**. What is double pay? Whatever you are paying him now, he worth double that, and if the passage says anything at all it obviously speaks of being generous toward the pastor's salary.

The value of God's pastor has been diminished by many men in church financial circles. Unfortunately this is where many men are measly, stingily and tight fisted with the pastor's salary. Since many of these men do not understand the value of the pastor who rules well, because they seek other standards **outside** of that which is given by God, then they see the work of the pastor oftentimes as sermons and nothing else. This is where many men in church financial circles ignore the Biblical perspective of how to honor the pastor. Why? The reasons vary depending on who is controlling the finances, which raises another issue which I care not to deal with at this time to any great degree except to say that it is clear that according to the New Testament it is the church leaders **themselves** who controlled the finances, not boards, committees, Deacons, Trustees, Financial officers, or any other officers in or out of the church. But let me list for you some of the reasons why so many men ignore the Biblical perspective of how to honor the pastor.

#### **1. Unbelief.**

This to me **is** the overarching problem. Since God commands the church to honor the pastor generously with pay, then a failure to do it is simply unbelief at whatever level.

#### **2. Trusting in dollars and cents.**

I am by no means implying that the issue of how much money is available for a salary is not important. What I am saying is that the pastor's finances **should not be allocated somewhere between the toilet paper and the chicken wings!** It is to be a top priority and the church should make it so!

#### **3. A "mother hen" mentality.**

I am convinced that there are many men who indeed have all of the best intentions of oversight of finances in a church and that they take their responsibility very seriously. Many men claim that they are just being good stewards over the finances of the church. But the question is, what is a good steward? A steward is one who has affairs to superintend for *another*. But how can one be a good steward over the finances of the church when the Bible explicitly **commands** that the pastor, who meets the standard of ruling well, is to be supported generously and it not be done? How does one claim to be a good steward who cannot be entrusted to follow the instruction from God, who is the Master? Ours is not to just sit on the money like a mother hen does with her eggs, and this is especially true concerning the pastor's salary.

#### **4. Misplaced priorities.**

There are many men in control of finances who would not hesitate for a *second* to use church funds to buy what is considered necessary items as *they* deem fit. And sometimes these things are not a priority *at all*. This leads to a waste of precious church funds. Yet, these men would not consider for a moment that the pastor's salary **is** a priority that should be considered well above many things that are labeled "priorities".

#### **5. Ignorance of the magnitude of the work of the pastor.**

Now in the minds of many men in church financial circles, they see the pastor's work as that which is very insignificant. They may reason within their minds (which at this point the Bible qualifies this as an *evil* surmising)

*"How long does it take to get these few sermons together anyway? I can do that just as good if not better than he can! Why should he get paid so much money for so little work?"*

This attitude, I'm convinced, is probably one that is the most prevalent in the minds of many, many men in financial circles today. They may never say it, but it's in their minds and in their actions!

#### **6. Comparing salaries in the world with the work of God in the church.**

This is a *major* trap that captures many a mind of a man or men in church financial circles. Sometimes these men compare jobs in the world with the role of the pastor and try through some

**unknown** method to rate the labor of the pastor with some field in the world. This is nowhere taught in scripture and should never be entertained whatsoever by any man or men who determine the financial livelihood of a pastor and his dependents.

#### **7. Personal hardships.**

Because something happened to you at your job which decreased your pay, why do you and why would you transfer that same mentality toward your pastor's pay. If you suffered some financial setback at your employment, why should you want to take it out on your pastor's finances? You have other options, such as, looking for other work which will increase your pay or getting another job, etc. The pastor makes his living from the gospel ministry *and no other*. He should expect from the church to receive what he needs, which he passionately labors over.

#### **8. Distrust in the pastor.**

It is clearly stated in DaWanda Howard's booklet, ["The Portrait Of A pastor"](#),

***"Although the unsaved community has more than their fair share of not understanding the role of the local church pastor, it is sad to say the majority of misunderstandings come from the professing Christian community.***

***Those who should understand, or at least trust the spirit-filled pastor, seem to be the ones who are the most suspect of their leader(s). Instead of trusting in the ability, leadership, and integrity of godly pastors, Christians question all of that as well as pastors' motives." 1.***

The area of finances always is a barometer of how much trust you place in your pastor. It is a loud and clear message to the pastor of how much or little you trust him when it comes to finances. If you cannot trust the pastor at *every* level, you should not trust him at *any* level. If you cannot trust the pastor you should not pay him *anything*. If you are going to pay him, then you are to do it with the right attitude or you should resign and allow God's church to move forward with men who have the right attitude toward God's faithful servant.

#### **9. Believing that speaking about finances is carnal and should be avoided as much as possible, or that speaking about finances will lead to carnality.**

First of all we need to understand the simple truth that carnality begins, not in the wallet, but in the *heart*. To avoid dealing with finances for the purpose of avoiding carnality already reveals that the heart of those who think this way are already carnal. Besides the fact that this mentality is nowhere in the Bible should eliminate any lack of responsibility on the part of any man or men distributing finances that will not deal with the issue of the pastor's salary. If you cannot properly handle money then why are you involved with it at all? If you are given to carnality, or fear that this is your bent, then what in the world are you doing in a position that has ***anything*** to do with money? If you cannot or will not sit down with the right attitude toward your pastor and treat him with the utmost respect and love and from that attitude generously supply his needs, then why are you involved in the salary process at all?

#### **10. Prior bad church experiences.**

Some men do not have the sense to realize that just because they had a bad church experience in their past, especially if it had to do with finances, does not somehow translate into a standard which I have the right to impose upon a Biblical pastor. Much ignorance is seen when people in financial circles are always suspect of a pastor and his salary as if to say that his goal is to rob the church or want all of the church's money. As I said in point nine, if you cannot or will not sit down with the right attitude toward your pastor and treat him with the utmost respect and love, and from that attitude, generously supply his needs, then why are you involved in the salary process at all?

So what should be the proper heart attitude in considering the salary of a pastor? Let's see what the text says.

*Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.*

Now what Paul is speaking of here is not paying a good pastor generously and a bad pastor less. What Paul is saying is that you should pay a pastor who rules well generously and he's the only one you **should** pay. The issue is not more or less money, it's more money or **no** money.

*What qualifies a man who is worthy of double pay is a man whose ministry clearly demonstrates that he labors in the word and in the teaching of the word. That's all. There should be no other standard or qualifications placed upon any pastor for his pay because there are no others given in the Bible.*

Notice that the "word and teaching" of the word are **not** separate, but seen as one unit. No one is fit for ministry nor financial support who does not meet this qualification.

*If a man is not a worker in his preaching and study, and if a man does not works hard in learning and in diligence in teaching the Bible, he's not fit for ministry or any financial support.*

The financial support of a pastor is not to be given because of his **title**, but because of his **labor in the word and teaching**. Notice that in both 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5 and 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 5, the pastor is seen as a laborer, a worker. A man who qualifies under these character traits should be highly loved and honored among the church body.

It is not a sin to pay a pastor who labors in this fashion a large salary, rather, it is a sin **not** to do it, seeing that this is a clear command from God.

*18 For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer [is] worthy of his reward.*

**The scripture says this!** Paul goes to the scriptures to support this truth of financial support. The issue of a pastor's salary is **not** to be determined by a personal opinion, nor is it to be done by worldly standards. It is to be done **according to the scriptures** and this is where Paul gets his Biblical support and where we should get ours. It was sinful *to withhold* feed to the ox who worked the fields. In simpler words, the ox was to be allowed to partake of the grain that his labor produced. It's only **common sense** that as a church grows, so does his responsibility and the needs of the pastor grow as well.

Notice the last portion of this verse. *The worker is **worthy** of his reward.* How **evil** is it for men to withhold what is due a pastor in ministry who labors. **God said** that he is **worthy** of his reward! By reward we mean the fruit naturally resulting from toils and endeavors. No pastor should feel that he should grovel toward the church to meet his needs! If he's a hard worker, then the church is not only obligated, but **commanded** to support him financially and generously. **That's what the scripture saith!**

*7 Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard, and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?*  
**1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:7**

This is common sense! I served faithfully many years in the US Army as many of you who read this book. I know that I didn't pay one cent of my own personal funds toward the military. The government of the United States of America made sure that I was fully supplied everything I needed to serve my country without having to use any of my personal funds to do it. Paul then uses another illustration of one who plants a vineyard. What man plants a vineyard and does not

eat of the fruit of it himself? It makes no sense! What man has a flock and does not partake of the milk of it? It makes no sense! The one who labors partakes of the fruit of his work. When one is a soldier in the military his needs are provided for. These examples are to demonstrate the example of support for workers.

*8 I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things? 9 For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing." God is not concerned about oxen, is He? 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:8*

Paul said that the understanding of this principle it is not from human judgment. He goes to scripture to support his teaching. Do you think that God is just concerned about oxen only? Do you think that the principle only applies to oxen and not to those who labor in the ministry?

*10 Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for **our sake** it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher [to thresh] in hope of sharing [the crops.] 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:10*

If a man works in the pastorate he should enjoy the fruits of his labor. He should plow in hope and thresh in the hope of partaking of the crops. Clearly the Bible teaches that the pastor should partake generously in the finances which his hands and work have labored so diligently in.

*11 If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we should reap material things from you? 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:11 (NASB)*

That my friends is the question. The spiritual seeds planted in your life should be seen as that which is of greater value than that of the material wealth in this life. If we truly value the spiritual above the material, then we should be more than willing to supply the material needs of those who sow spiritual truth in our lives.

Do you honor your pastor? Now do you understand the question? It's not in empty words or praise. True honor is demonstrated in giving the man what he needs. No church will ever be what God intended her to be as long as she insults His servant.

May every reader of this booklet who has a faithful pastor or pastors, examine your heart to see if you are obedient in this area.

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